

The Barrier to Investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria and Way Forward

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Abstract: This paper looked at barriers to investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. Secondary data were employed in the paper presentation and the secondary data were collected from both online and print publications through the content analysis method. The paper identified the poor implementation of national policy on education funding recommendation, insecurity challenges, corruption, non-payment of counterpart funding, revenue leakages, subsidy payment and fall in national revenue as barriers to investment into the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. To address these problems, the paper suggested full implementation of the National policy on funding education that states that the government shall allocate a minimum of 26% of the total national budget to the education sector at all levels.

Keywords: Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE), Investment.

Introduction

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme is a sub-component of the universal basic education programme launched in 1999 in Nigeria (Ogunode, Mcbrown, & Ukozor, 2022).

Maduewesi (1999) defined early childhood care education as the education offered to children who have not yet reached the statutory age of beginning primary school. He further maintained that it is a semi-formal education arrangement, usually outside the home where young children from about the age of 3 years are exposed through play-like activities in a group setting through mental, social and physical learning suited to their developmental stages, until the mandatory age of government-approved formal schooling. Ojameruaye (2010) viewed Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as that which is the care and education of children from birth to primary school age (5+ or 6 years), focusing on children's survival, growth, development and learning, including health, nutrition, hygiene, as well as cognitive, social, physical and emotional development.

The objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) according to (the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) include: the effect of a smooth transition from home to school; preparing the child for the primary level of education; to providing adequate care and supervision for the children while their parent are at work (on the farm, in the market, office e.t.c); to inculcating social norms and values, to inculcating in the child the spirit of inquiring and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toy. e.t.c.; to develop in the children a sense of cooperation and team spirit; and to aid learning of

good habits and the rudiments of letters, numbers, colours, shapes and forms e.t.c. The realization of the objective of the early childhood education programme depends on the availability of professional caregivers in the country.

Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) is characterized by many challenges (Ogunode, 2020a; Ogunode, Mcbrown, & Ukozor, 2022; Ogunode & Ojo, 2021; Ogunode, Jegede & Ajape 2021). One of the most pressing problems is a poor investment in the sector. Musa (2019) described the poor funding of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria as responsible for the poor implementation of the programme while Amadi 2013; Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape 2021 and Ogunode and Ojo 2021) in agreement noted inadequate funding of the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria.

The poor funding of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is responsible for inadequate teachers (Ogunode, Akinsua-Ajape. Jegede, 2021; Ogunode, Gregory & .Jegede, 2021 and Ogunode & Abashi, 2020). Adequate funding is very important in the management of educational programmes, especially the early childhood education programme. The development of the early childhood education programme depends on the number of funds allocated for the administration and management of the programme. In Nigeria, inadequate funding has been a major problem facing the management of education, especially the early childhood education programme. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) drives its budget from the Ministry of Education both at the federal, state and local government authorities. Ogunode (2020) observed that the annual allocation for the administration of education in Nigeria is inadequate and it is below the recommendation of UNESCO by 15%-20% for developing countries like Nigeria.

The funding of the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria is the constitutional responsibility of the local government authority. The state government and the federal government has the roles of supporting the funding. It has been observed that many local governments in Nigeria do not provide adequate budgetary allocation to the administration and management of the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in their respective local government. The state government have not done well only a few have provided adequate funds for the administration of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in their states. The federal government intervention funds considering the total allocation to education and the percentage of allocation to the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) at the federal level are poor. Mcbrown, & Ogunode,(2022); Adenike & Peter 2016; Amadi 2013; Musa (2019) and Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape 2021) observed that educational funding in Nigeria is poor. The federal, state and local governments have failed to implement the recommendation of 15%-20% of the national annual budget for education because of many pressing problems.

Many factors have been identified as responsible for the poor investment of the various government in the funding of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. It is very important to discuss the various barriers to effective investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria.

Barriers to Investment in the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria

There are barriers to investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. Some of the barriers include; insecurity challenges, corruption, non-payment of counterpart funding, revenue loss, poor implementation of national policy on education funding recommendation, subsidy payment and a fall in national revenue

Poor Implementation of National Policy on Education Funding Recommendation

Poor implementation of the national policy on funding education in Nigeria has resulted in poor investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape (2021) and Ogunode (2020) asserted that the inability of the federal government to implement the UNESCO 15%-20% recommendation for education in the national budget

every year is one of the major reasons for the shortage of funds for the administration of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE). The Federal Government has in the last six years, failed to meet up with the benchmark proposed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization from the percentage of the national budget to the education sector. UNESCO had in the Education-for- All Report for 2000 to 2015 tagged, 'The Dakar Framework for Action', called for a significant increase in the financial commitment by national governments and donors to the education sector to accelerate progress towards the EFA goals. —The high-level group on EFA proposed that, governments should spend between four per cent and six per cent of the Gross National Product (GDP) on education and that within the government budget, between 15 per cent and 20 per cent should be earmarked for education. This recommendation is poorly implanted in the Nigerian education system. Odigwe, & Owan, (2019) concluded that the total allocation to the education sector from 2009 to 2018 is N4,038,115,000,000. The results further revealed a difference of N 10,311,805,000,000 between the UNESCO benchmark of 26% and the actual allocation to the education sector for the same period. It was concluded that the total allocation made to the education sector within the period of 2009 to 2018 is low and below the UNESCO benchmark.

Insecurity Challenges

Insecurity challenges in Nigeria are a barrier to investment in the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) Nigeria because a lot of huge investment is going into the insecurity budget every year preventing investment in other critical sectors like education. This submission is confirmed by Ukozor, Ogunode, and Mcbrown (2022) who submitted that the insecurity problem facing Nigeria is consuming a lot of funds. The Nigerian government yearly spent a huge sum of money in tackling the insecurity problem across the federation. The state government and local governments too are involved in spending huge of their resources in the fight against insecurity in their respective states and local government areas. From 2015 to 2021 according to Blueprint, (2022), security budgets have been on the increase just as total national budgets increased. In 2015, when the national budget was N4.405 trillion, the total budget for the security sector was N988,892,506,442. In 2016, when the budget rose to N6.06 trillion, the security sector got N1.07 trillion, just as it got a total of N1.15 trillion in 2017 when the budget rose to N7.44 trillion. In 2018, the budget was N9.12 trillion while the security sector got a total vote of N1.35 trillion. And in 2019 and 2020, the budget was N8.92 trillion and N10.59 trillion, while security got N1.4 trillion and N1.8 trillion respectively. In the N13.59 trillion 2021 budget, defence and security got N1.96 trillion with another N722.53 billion about to be added through the supplementary budget. Nigeria's military budget is greater than the combined armed forces spending of the rest of West Africa. The funding covers the main security agencies, including the army, air force and navy, the intelligence agencies as well as the Interior Ministry, which is in charge of homeland security, including the Nigerian Police Force. Checks indicated an average of N1.3 trillion was yearly appropriated and fully disbursed to the agencies involved to take care of their capital and recurrent needs, including training and acquisition of soft and hardware to upgrade their operations meant to keep the country safe (Blueprint,2022). The large amount that insecurity is consuming is affecting spending on other sectors like education including early childhood education.

Corruption

Corruption in the educational sector in Nigeria has reduced investment in the sector. Ukozor, et al (2022) noted that corruption in the administration and management of education Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in Nigeria is also responsible for the limited funds in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes. Funds released for the implementation of programmes and policies in educational institutions are mismanaged and looted (Ogunode & Abashi, (2020) and Ogunode & Stephen (2021). This submission is confirmed by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) that the sum of N1,016,133.08 billion (N1 billion) misappropriated by six State Universal Basic

Education Boards (SUBEBs) was yet to be returned (AllAfrica, 2021). The funds were meant for the provision of human and material resources that will support the delivery of quality education at primary schools across the country. Also, Gift (2018), submitted that in September 2018, Anum Iho, former chairman of the State Basic Education Board (SUBEB) – an offshoot of the Universal Basic Education Commission in the states, established to address the inequality in educational opportunity at the basic level and improving the quality of its provision – was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment for embezzling funds meant for the training of teachers in Benue State. Iho was found guilty of misappropriating N91,5 million (€220,000), and of taking a bribe of N14,9 million (over €36,000) (Ogunode & Stephen, 2021; Ogunode 2020; Ogunode, Jegede, & Ajape 2021). Transparency International says that 66% (percent) of the money Nigerian governments allocated to education was stolen by corrupt officials. According to the report, corruption is commonplace in education systems across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).—This affects education access, quality, inclusion and learning outcomes with devastating consequences, not only for national economic growth but also for the life chances of children, their families and communities, the report said. The report highlighted —Resource misallocation, corrupt procurement, exchange of sex for grades, examination malpractices, fake qualifications, teacher absenteeism, and corrupt recruitment practices as the various corruption risks and challenges facing education systems in all countries (Premium, 2019).

Non-payment of Counterpart Funding

The funding of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria is designed in such a way that the federal government provided intervention funds for infrastructural facilities development and capacity building development. To access these funds, the state government must provide a matching grant to access the federal government UBE fund. Many state governments have refused to provide the matching grant to access the federal intervention funds and this has reduced investment in the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) across the federation. Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated); Peter & Isaac (2013) and Olubor, (undated) opined that it is alleged that some state governments have not been able to access this because they cannot provide the counterpart fund. The federal government has described this trend as worrisome. Billions of naira meant to expand access and improve the quality of basic education delivery are deliberately left un-accessed and therefore unutilized while the problems facing effective basic education delivery continue to persist. Ukozor, et al (2022) observed that the lack of political will to pay the counterpart funding of UBE and access the federal fund is another major factor responsible for the poor funding of early childhood education in Nigeria. A report from Blueprint (2021) indicated that several of the 36 states have reportedly failed to pay the counterpart funds to access over N51bn matching grants earmarked by the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) for basic education in the country, as of July 2019. —The report by UBEC that several states have failed to access N51.6bn of matching grants suggests that these states are doing very little for poor children. It also explains why the number of out-of-school children in the country has risen from 10.5 million to 13.2 million. SERAP, (2022) noted that a violation of the right to education will occur when there is insufficient expenditure or misallocation of public resources, which results in the non-enjoyment of the right to quality education by poor children within the states. SERAP said that —States' dereliction in paying counterpart funds is antithetical to the Nigerian Constitution 1999 [as amended], the Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act, and the country's international human rights obligations. Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated) and Gershberg et al (2015)¹⁷, subsisted that some of the factors responsible for the delayed and non-assessment of UBEC-IF matching grants by states include: the non-contribution of counterpart fund, slow utilization of FGN-UBE intervention funds, low commitment to basic education on the part of some state governments, as well as political economy interests at the highest level of state administration. Nwoko (2015), lamented that states tend to prioritize financing tertiary

institutions over basic education. In part, this undoubtedly relates to their limited fiscal space for increased spending.

Revenue Leakages

Revenue leakages are another barrier to investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. The Nigerian revenue system is open to too many leakages reducing the total money that finally gets to the government. Every year Nigerian government is losing billions of Naira to revenue leakages in the various revenue generation agencies. Fasua (2022) submitted that many areas in Nigeria are losing revenues. For one, our erstwhile top crude oil assets – Bonny, Bonga, Forcados – are bleeding. Nigeria loses perhaps 1,000,000 barrels per day to thieves and shut-ins as a result of vandalism. A recent report by the *Economist* details how we are the ONLY oil-producing country not benefiting from recent highs in crude oil prices. Vanguard (2022) reported that the Joint House of Representatives Committee on Finance, Banking and Currency has said that Nigeria lost about \$30 billion from 2005 to 2019 annually from revenue leakages. The leakages were basically from activities of agencies and companies in banking, oil exploration, engineering, procurement, construction, installation, marine transportation, manufacturing and telecommunications. These losses in revenue from the national level have affected investment in education, especially the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria.

Subsidy Payment

Annually, the Nigerian government is subsidizing petroleum products with billions of Naira. The subsidy payment is consuming a lot of funds from the federal government of Nigeria. Analysis of government allocation according to Onyekwena, Uzor, Oloko, & Adeniran, (undated) over the last decade shows that fossil-fuel subsidy has been one of the largest expenditure items in the budget. In addition, enormous resources are annually lost due to leakages in public procurement and outright corruption. Cable (2022) disclosed that within the first six months of 2022, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) Limited recorded N2.39 trillion as gross revenue from oil and gas sales receipts, while the subsidy claimed amounted to N2.6 trillion. The Cable Index analysis showed that Nigeria paid N1.59 trillion to cover part of the subsidy costs in the last six months — leaving an outstanding balance of N1.01 trillion to be recovered from July 2022 proceeds in August. This year, the federal government has projected to spend N4 trillion on petrol subsidies. Ukozor, et al (2022) pointed out subsidy payment is reducing the revenue of the country and has affected government expenditure on other sectors which include education and early childhood education programme. The subsidy payment programme of the Nigerian government has contributed to the poor funding of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in Nigeria. Subsidy payment is consuming resources that are supposed to be used for the development of other sectors in the economy, especially the education sector which includes the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme.

Fall in National Revenue

The fall in national revenue of Nigeria has resulted in poor investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. Ifeanyi, Ogunode & Ajape (2021) opined that the shortfall in national revenue of Nigeria has impacted negatively the funding of education especially the funding of early childhood education. Punch Newspaper (2021) disclosed that the Federal Government recorded a revenue shortfall of N15tn from 2015 to 2020. The revenue shortfall led to a funding gap of N3.75tn in the implementation of capital projects of Ministries, Departments and Agencies, according to an analysis of the budgetary provisions and budget implementation reports from the Budget Office of the Federation. The result disclosed that the total revenue projection for the six years was N31.9tn, while about N16.9tn was generated, resulting in a shortfall of N15tn. The total revenue allocated for capital projects in the period under review was N11.9tn, while the actual amount released to the MDAs was estimated at N8.2tn. The data made available to the public showed that in the 2015 fiscal year, the Federal Government approved the sum of N557bn for capital projects, out of which, N387bn was

released, resulting in a funding gap of N169.6bn. From the N1.58tn budgeted for capital projects in 2016, the sum of N1.21tn was released, creating a deficit of N368bn. For 2017, N1.56tn was released for the execution of capital projects, out of the budgeted amount of N2.17tn. This resulted in a funding shortfall of N611.35bn. In 2018, the government approved N2.8tn for capital projects but, released N1.8tn for implementation. This caused a funding deficit of N1.01tn. Punch also revealed that in 2019, a funding gap of N863.9bn for the execution of capital projects was recorded. In the 2019 annual budget, a total amount of N2.03tn was allocated for capital expenditure, out of which, N1.16tn was released. An analysis of the revised budget for the 2020 fiscal year showed that N2.6tn was projected to be spent on capital projects, but N1.94tn was released. This resulted in a funding gap of N733bn. The fall in national revenue also affected the allocation to education. Many factors accounted for the shortfall of revenue in Nigeria. Some of the factors include a fall in crude oil prices in the international market and corruption.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined the barriers to effective investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. The paper concluded that poor implementation of national policy on education funding recommendation, insecurity challenges, corruption, non-payment of counterpart funding, revenue leakages, subsidy payment and fall in national revenue are the barriers to effective investment in the Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria. To address these problems, the paper suggested that:

1. Full implementation of the National policy on funding education that states that the government shall allocate a minimum of 26% of the total national budget to the education sector at all levels.
2. The government should block all revenue leakages in the country and strengthen revenue-generating agencies to increase revenue generation in the country;
3. The government should use its anti-corruption agencies to fight all forms of corruption in the administration and management of Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria.
4. Federal government should deduct the matching grant from all the states at the federal account and release the full UBE funds to the various states with their agreement. This will help to increase investment in Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE) in Nigeria.
5. The government should stop the subsidy payment regime and reinvest the funds into the critical sector like health and education with special consideration to Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE).
6. Federal and state governments should diversify the economy and increase sources of internal revenue apart from petroleum products. This will help to sustain investment in the educational sector with special consideration to Early Child Care Development and Education (ECCDE).

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